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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the role of the on-site consultant in a teacher-initiated change program in Cleveland's elementary schools. A local university offered 15 hours of on-site course work at each school, and the counselor was to serve as a non-directive resource person who would facilitate the process of translating course content into classroom application and respond to teacher requests for assistance. To some extent, the definition of the consultant's role was modified by the developmental transition from stranger to friend, from university consultant to fellow staff member. It soon became apparent that the optimal balance between the roles of stranger and friend, as well as the actual definition of the consultant's role, varied as a function of context, issues, and the individuals with whom the consultant was interacting. The paper explores further the parallels between on-site consultation and individualized instruction in which the consultant and school personnel became collaborators in the learning process. The variety of roles assumed by the consultant are elaborated in support of the paper's basic premise that definition of the consultant's role was a dynamic on-going process. (Author)

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On-Site Consultation: Evolution and Resolution of Role Definition and Conflict

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Consultation is, at best, a difficult business. Tilles (1961) has stated that unless the manager or person seeking the consultant's services knows what he/she is looking for from the consultant, the manager is likely to be disappointed with the outcomes of the consulting relationship. Schein (1969) and other proponents of process consultation on the other hand argue quite astutely that the real problem quite often is that persons seeking consultation do not, in fact, know what the problem is nor should they be expected to know exactly what they are looking for from the consultant. Definition of the consultant's role is therefore not only a central issue in the consultation relationship but also frequently a difficult issue to resolve. In the P.E.E.C C. Project (Planning Educational Environments for Cleveland Children) definition of the on-site consultant's role was an on-going process influenced more by the forces of the change process itself than by any direct attempt by individuals to define the role.

During the planning phase of the PEECC project, the faculties of both elementary schools requested that university services be incorporated into the project plan for support services during the implementation phase of the project. In addition to fifteen hours of coursework to be conducted on-site at each school, the selected university was also to provide each school with an on-site consultant for two days a week. Beyond the identification of the time commitment, the definition of the consultant's role was not elaborated. While it could be assumed that some staff members may have had some conceptualization of how the consultant was to function in the overall program, the specific expectations for the consultant were never formally set forth.

Prior to the university consultant's actual involvement in the schools, the only clarification of role definition was provided not by the school staffs but by consultants external to the project. According to these consultants,

the on-site consultant from the university was to serve as a resource to teachers as they attempted to translate theory and principles presented in the university courses into classroom practice. The consultant was to assume a Rogerian posture of providing encouragement and support for the staff as they experimented with innovative teaching strategies and techniques. Above all else, the consultant was not to assume a change agent role. Therefore, the initiative for contacting the consultant and defining the assistance needed was to rest with the school staff.

As the on-site consultant assigned to one of the schools, I found the general role definition set forth by the external consultants to be simultaneously reassuring and disconcerting. After working with teachers for three years as an external change agent, I was relieved to have the onus of responsibility rest with the teachers and school staff. I was optimistic about the possibilities for change given teacher ownership of the goals and directions for change. Furthermore, my clinical training was such that I felt comfortable and capable of assuming a Rogerian posture in a consultation relationship. However, there were several ambiguities that were not addressed by the general role definition. Was this definition consonant with the expectations that the school staff held for me as a consultant? Which if any specific teachers or staff groups would I work with primarily? Had any mechanisms for consultant utilization been established? Was there to be, as in process consultation, a period during which the on-site consultant and the school staff would collaborate on defining the consultant's role?

During the course of my two-year involvement with the school, I gained an increasing appreciation for the rather ambiguous role definition which was originally provided. Regardless of the nature or specificity of the original role definition for the on-site consultant, it became apparent that the

consultant's role definition as well as the consultant could not and should not resist change. When an organization as complex as a school which in turn functions within the even greater complexity of a bureaucratic school system engages in a change process, all individuals, regardless of their role, are influenced by the change process. This paper will trace the four basic stages in the evolution of the on-site consultant's role definition and will identify the primary forces that contributed to that evolutionary process. Since the last stage in the evolution of the role definition proved to be stable and functionally useful, it will be elaborated in the concluding section of the paper.

Stage 1: On-site Consultant as Rogerian Resource

During the first few weeks of university involvement, I assumed the prescribed role of a Rogerian resource person. My rationale for doing so was simple. By assuming the role defined by the external consultants, I was at least meeting the consultants' expectations for the on-site consultant and was performing the role in a fashion consonant with the theoretical intent of the project. Furthermore, the prescribed role was such that if it was incongruous with the staff's expectations, the role could be modified easily. In the interim, the role provided me with much needed time for observing my new environment as I waited to learn when and how the staff intended to involve me in their program.

My initial involvement consisted primarily of orientation activities. Like a first year teacher, I was given a desk, a mailbox, a name tag on the door of the central office where my desk was located, and a stack of minutes from the preceding year's staff project planning meetings. Parallel to the experience of the new teacher, my orientation consisted basically of resolving administrative issues such as placement in the building with little attention

paid to my integration into the social system of the school. The phrase "sink-or swim" typically used to describe the experience of the first year teacher was an equally appropos descriptor of the "socialization" of the on-site consultant. I knew that I had become at least an adjunct staff member - I had a mailbox and desk to prove it. However, the lack of social linkages and a clear conception of how I was to contribute to the on-going tasks of the school and the project contributed to a strong affective experience of isolation, the same affect typically used to describe the teaching experience (Lortie, 1975).

To overcome the sense of isolation and general lack of social contacts, I began frequenting the teachers' lunchroom where from informal social interaction, I began learning to know individual staff members and to develop the foundation of the ultimately important trust relationship with the staff. Although I initiated these contacts primarily for the purpose of learning to know the individual staff members with whom I would be working, I had expected that during the course of such interactions I would also be able to learn more about the staff's expectations for the on-site consultant. However, despite numerous contacts with most of the teachers, the interactions were virtually void of any discussion of my role or how I was perceived as a potential resource to the individual teacher. The teachers volunteered much information regarding the functioning of the school in general and the problems confronting the school without ever asking or stating how an on-site consultant should function or contribute to the solution of the identified problems. From the discussions it appeared as though most of the teachers did not have any clearly established expectations for the on-site consultant.

Although the initial role definition facilitated the establishment of trust relationships in that the role was non-threatening to the internal

equilibrium of the organization, several key factors or forces began to operate in such a fashion as to necessitate modification of the initial role definition. The most obviously influential factor was that I was responsible for teaching the first module of the first university course which was to address the second of the two staff objectives for the project, the improvement of student self-concept. Since self-concept was my primary area of professional interest, it was logical that I should be the university staff member to meet with the school's Self-Concept Committee to plan collaboratively the first course. From the first planning meeting it was apparent that the Rogerian resource role of the on-site consultant was to conflict with the role of university instructor. As a Rogerian resource person, I should have agreed to address only the "how to" issues regarding improvement of student self-concept as requested by the committee. However, from my past experience, I had become committed to the belief that teacher self-concept would directly if not causally relate to student self-concept. Furthermore, I felt that an understanding of the nature of the self-concept, its development, and its relationship to a teacher's entire approach to classroom teaching were prerequisites to the "how to" issues if the teachers were ever to do more than rotely implement a variety of isolated self-concept "cookbook" techniques. Although the committee members appeared relieved by my taking the initiative, I did in fact transgress the boundaries of my original role and contributed to the process of my own role-redefinition.

The accompanying force or factor that contributed to the transition in the role definition was my own discomfort with the ambiguity of the originally proffered role definition. Theoretically, the role of Rogerian resource was appropriate given the nature of the project. However, once it became apparent that mechanisms for consultant utilization had not been established and that

the staff did not have specific expectations for the consultant as a resource, my discomfort with the ambiguity rose in geometric proportions. By the third week of involvement, the prospect of being an unconsulted consultant was so unappealing that the opportunity to assume the familiar role of university instructor was very attractive.

The third and most subtle force which influenced the process of role redefinition resulted from my gradual assimilation into the social network and the accompanying transition from "stranger" to "friend". Although Powdermaker (1966) and others stress the importance of maintaining an optimal balance between the two roles when involved in anthropological or sociological fieldwork, I found that if I wanted more than "surface encounters" (Oleson and Whittaker, 1967), if I wanted to learn individual teachers' philosophies of teaching and attitudes toward students, I had to do more than "reflect" or rephrase what they were sharing. I had to reciprocate by sharing my own perceptions, opinions and beliefs. In some instances such sharing revealed differences in beliefs and teaching philosophies. In all instances, such sharing, while contributing to the formation of greater trust and openness in communication, violated the value-free posture of the Rogerian role.

Stage 2: On-site Consultant as University Instructor

Although the role of university instructor conflicted with the original role of the on-site consultant as Rogerian resource person in terms of the active-passive continuum of involvement, the benefits of assuming the dual role outweighed the negative consequences of the inherent role conflict. The role of the university instructor teaching the self-concept course had been rather explicitly defined in terms of what was to be taught to whom during what time. Teaching the course provided a forum or vehicle for demonstrating specific classroom strategies and techniques and for discussing how principles and

concepts could be transferred into actual classroom practice. As the course instructor as well as the on-site consultant, there was little chance of misinterpretation as I subsequently also collaborated in the transfer process. More important however was the way in which the process of teaching the course contributed to a crystallization of the on-site consultant's role. By the end of the first module, I was perceived as a resource person with a specific area of "expertise", a person to be consulted regarding matters of classroom climate, classroom management, affective education and so forth. By defining my own areas of knowledge and skill, teachers were able to begin to associate my role as a consultant with their roles as teachers, aides, or administrators and to define ways in which I could complement their roles and facilitate the achievement of their objectives.

In retrospect, it is not difficult to understand why there was so much ambiguity surrounding the role of the on-site consultant. Although university or external consultants are frequently involved in school systems, their involvement is frequently limited to interaction with administrative staff not the teaching staff. When the interaction is with the teaching staff, there is typically a rather specific task or project which serves as the focus of the interaction. In any event, the consultant rarely becomes a staff member whose tasks are to be teacher-defined. In contrast, in the present instance, the on-site consultant did by virtue of the nature of the involvement become one of the staff if only marginally so. Therefore the role of the on-site consultant, which was virtually foreign to not only the staff but to the traditional conceptualization of the organizational structure of an elementary school, had to be forged in the course of the change process. Unlike the traditional roles of principal, supervisor, teacher, teacher aide, and school specialist, the role of the on-site consultant was without a specific job

description of tasks and responsibilities, a specific position in the organizational hierarchy or a specific mechanism for service utilization.

In course planning meetings with the staff self-concept committee, it was decided that the first module of the self-concept course would be largely experiential in nature. The purpose for this approach was two-fold. First, the experiential approach provided the staff with a personal experience of the affective impact of the various strategies and structured experiences frequently suggested for classroom use (Canfield and Wells, 1976). Following each structured experience, a brief lecture covering the underlying rationale for the experience, the objectives of the experience, and the possibilities for classroom application were discussed. Simultaneously, the content of the first module was such that it served as a staff development program designed to enhance the personal awareness and the self esteem of the individual staff members as well as interpersonal interaction and communication among staff members. Although the limitations of such "T-Group" interventions on organizational development have been documented (Rogers, 1969; Katz and Kahn, 1966), formal and informal feedback from the staff during the year following the completion of the module supported the belief that a personal experiential approach had merit.

As a result of the university instructor role and the influence of that role on my role as on-site consultant, consultant utilization increased with all requests for my involvement reflecting various topics, skills or principles explored during the self-concept module. I was scheduled to meet with the staff self-concept committee to work toward the development of school-wide self-concept enhancement strategies and to attend grade-level staff meetings in which the staff explored self-concept issues peculiar to their age-level student. In a few instances, individual teachers approached me for consultation

regarding specific self-concept issues or interpersonal difficulties. In several instances when I tried to revert to the Rogerian posture, staff members pressed me for an opinion or "answer". Despite the experiential nature of the course and the "facilitator" role which I assumed while teaching the module, the role of university instructor fostered the expectation or perception that I should have answers. As Schein (1969) cautions, offering solutions merely creates the opportunity for the organization's members to reject the solutions. In some instances with a few teachers or groups of teachers, I quickly recognized the validity of Schein's observations and the value of process consultation.

In a few instances, I assumed the role of process consultant and focused primarily on the process events which occurred in the course of meetings I attended. From my observations, the assumptions underlying process consultation (Schein, 1969) applied to my consultation relationship to the school and its staff. Provided at least a few staff members recognized the existence of process difficulties, this role was well received. However, my role as university instructor had created expectations of more active leadership such that I received requests to perform some of the group maintenance functions such as homogenizing and gatekeeping. As a "staff member", a perception that reflected the staff's acknowledgement that I had become a "friend" and colleague, I was expected to contribute, not merely observe. Furthermore, for the most part, staff meetings were very task oriented with few if any members aware of the interactions or process difficulties which characterized many meetings.

It would be misleading to attribute my assuming a more active role in committee meetings solely to the altered expectations of staff members. In many instances, my perception of who my client actually was led to role conflict and the taking of a particular stance in the course of meetings. Although I had

obviously joined the project as a consultant to the school staff, I was never truly able to divorce myself from the belief that in reality, my client was the student. Theoretically, administration and staff as well as university personnel were all devoted to serving the same client, the student. However, as I endorsed staff suggestions for program development or alteration which I saw as having obvious benefit for the students, I frequently observed resistance to such suggestions from other staff members. The resistance seldom reflected a basic theoretical difference in perceptions of what had the greatest ultimate potential for benefitting the student but rather a basic personal or institutional constraint for which I had little understanding.

In some instances, I lacked an understanding of various bureaucratic constraints. In other instances, I lacked an understanding of limitations imposed externally on the school system itself. As a relative newcomer to the staff, I also had an incomplete knowledge of the history of key interpersonal dynamics within the organizational hierarchy. In all but a few instances, my understanding of the motives, goals, and strengths of individual staff members was incomplete. Without such knowledge and understanding, many situations and occurrences were totally incomprehensible to me. I didn't comprehend how teachers who recognized the relationship between individualized instruction and student self-concept could reject suggestions for individualizing classroom practices, why the principle was so enraged by my suggestion to the self-concept committee that we, in accord with the project manager's request, draft a document of our intended school-wide self-concept development strategies, or why a staff that cited self-concept development as one of its two primary objectives sought individual consultation so infrequently.

In retrospect, my expectations seem embarrassingly naive. Given their stated objectives I truly anticipated that thirty some teachers plus administrators

would request suggestions, assistance in implementation of self-concept strategies, and/or feedback regarding classroom climate and procedural organization as they affected student self-concept development. When these expectations failed to be realized, I began questioning - questioning my role, my interpersonal skills, and the very value of the knowledge and skills which I had to offer in terms of their applicability to the classroom. Such questioning led to a self-declared moratorium and the emergence of a third role which I assumed for approximately one month.

Stage 3: On-site Consultant as Student of the System

As a student of the system, I began by identifying three possible hypotheses or explanations for the underutilization of consultation services. One hypothesis was that the theory, principles and methods which we, as university personnel, deemed relevant really were not applicable, relevant or possible to implement in the urban classroom. Aware of the documented lack of credibility of university-based change agents (Blumberg and Schmuck, 1972) I began to entertain the possibility that this perception held by public school personnel was valid. The rival hypothesis was that although the entire staff was involved in a "change" project, there was limited commitment to change and goal ownership of the goals of the project. Although the goals of the project had been identified and developed by the staff, it was conceivable that given the traditional independent nature of teaching and lack of experience in inter-dependent, collaborative staff efforts, the staff may have gone through the process without engaging all or even the majority of its members in the process and without engendering individual commitment either to the identified goals or to the process of change itself. Such a process is extremely difficult even when group members are experienced and skilled in such matters. Blumberg and Schmuck (1972) suggest that schools tend to hire individuals who have difficulty

in key process skills such as exercising influence, decision-making, and problem solving. Lortie (1972) lends support for this position in his analysis of the history, the recruitment practices, the socialization processes, the reward system and the endemic uncertainties of the teaching profession.

The third hypothesis was that the staff was in fact committed to the stated goals and the change process but that given the lack of previous experience as change agents and various personal, institutional or organizational barriers to change, change would occur but at an almost imperceptively slow and tedious pace.

My second task as a student of the system was the collection and analysis of data which would make it possible to identify the accurate hypothesis and develop a consultation role in accordance with that hypothesis. The data collection process included observation, participant observation, review and analysis of data collected during the course, and "field testing" in the classroom of various techniques that I had recommended in the course to test for myself whether my "claims" about these strategies were in fact valid. After a few weeks as a student, I recognized that not one but all three hypotheses were valid in at least some situations and that the interpretation most germane to a given situation was a function of the context, issues, and individuals involved in that situation.

In some instances, the first hypothesis was valid. For example, as I purposefully field tested specific affective techniques across grade levels, it became apparent that certain techniques while quite effective at some grade levels needed modification if they were to be effective at other grade levels. As I observed several teachers' styles, I also recognized that the use of affective techniques or structured experiences simply was not compatible with their personal teaching styles. Simultaneously, I recognized that my bias

favoring the open-classroom and the "humanistic" teacher was limited as I learned to appreciate and respect a rather authoritarian, traditional teacher and her ability to clearly communicate her concern and caring for each individual student. Furthermore, the perceived relevance of a particular strategy or method varied as a function of competing issues of concern to the teacher or staff members. For example, self-concept strategies, while relevant to self-concept development, frequently conflicted with control issues or classroom management issues. For other teachers, the perceived relevance and merit of self-concept strategies were diminished by their perception that allocation of time to self-concept development decreased the amount of time that could be devoted to their primary issue of concern, teaching the basics. From my observation and field testing, I concluded that the relevance of the university coursework varied greatly as a function of the context in which it was to be used (grade level, small group, whole group, etc.), the individual teacher (compatibility with personal teaching style), and the issues of primary concern (affective vs. cognitive issues, long-range vs. short-term objectives, etc.).

Other situations tended to support the second hypothesis. From earlier observations and interactions with the staff, I recognized that a few staff members simply were not committed to the program. However, those staff members were not representative of the staff who for the most part demonstrated varying degrees of commitment to the program as evidenced by their active involvement and initiative in program planning meetings, grade-level meetings, etc. Furthermore, just as varying degrees of commitment to the program were demonstrated among the staff, varying degrees of commitment could be observed within the same individual as a function of the context and issues at hand. The same teacher who experimented with learning centers and individualized instruction for one content area reverted to and defended whole group instruction

for other content areas. A teacher who did an elaborate self-concept unit reverted to screaming and denigrating students during arithmetic instruction.

Another situation which had rather serious ramifications for the self-concept objective involved a role conflict between the principal and myself. By endorsing the project manager's request for the self-concept committee to draft a document regarding specific plans for program development, I had hoped to expedite the crystallization and clarification of the committee's verbalized intentions for school-wide efforts in student self-concept development. The project manager's request appeared reasonable and potentially beneficial to the extent that documentation would soon be followed by action toward implementation of the proposed programs rather than continued diffuse discussions. The principal made it very clear that she did not share my perception but rather saw the request as entrapment, that the document would be used "against" the staff in the future as an evaluation of their achievement of their stated objective. Provided the staff successfully implemented the outlined programs, I could not understand how use of the document as an evaluative measure constituted a threat to the staff. By stating so I triggered a torent of affectively laden statements that revealed that the real issue was what amounted to a will struggle around a power issue between two individuals within the school system's hierarchy.

Although refusal to draft the requested document meant a serious setback to the development and implementation of a self-concept program, I recognized that there was no way to argue my position successfully regarding such an obviously volatile issue. I also recognized that by pressing the issue I would have no longer had to worry about maintaining an optimal balance between "stranger" and "friend" - I would have been clearly labelled "enemy". More important however was the recognition of a basic principle. Regardless of

prior demonstration of commitment to a particular objective, the degree of commitment to that objective could vary greatly as a function of the context, issues, and other individuals involved in a particular situation. Despite her general commitment to the project and its objectives, the principal chose a course of action which clearly thwarted achievement of the second objective. Given the specific context, issues, and individuals involved in this specific situation, her commitment to the program objective was superceded by her commitment to what she perceived as "protecting" her staff.

Still other experiences tended to lend support to the third hypothesis. During the course of grade level meetings as well as interactions with individual staff members, I recognized specific policies at the school, school system, and state levels which acted as barriers to implementation of new strategies and procedures. For example, attempts to "mainstream" students in special classes into regular classes for specific content area instruction were vetoed by the principal. Such efforts, which pre-dated formal legislation of mainstreaming, were perceived as violating regulated quotas for class size and placing inordinate demands on regular classroom teachers.

In other instances, teachers acknowledged the desirability of individualized instruction and the use of reading materials matching the student's reading ability regardless of the readability level of the materials. However, teachers frequently indicated that the school system mandated curricular materials to be used and that their supervisors "checked" whether in fact the appropriate grade level materials were being used. Assessing whether this rationale for not using "inappropriate" grade level materials would have in fact evoked criticism from supervisors or whether this explanation was merely a rationalization for not individualizing classroom instruction was difficult. In some instances, I was aware that a specific classroom management strategy that I had endorsed did not meet with a supervisor's approval and that the teacher was concerned about

the effect of the incident on her evaluation by the supervisor. However, in other instances, I knew the supervisor personally and could not imagine her taking issue with any strategy for promoting individualized instruction.

Of all the identified external barriers to change, none appeared to have a stronger, more pervasive limiting effect on teachers' willingness to "experiment" with new teaching strategies than the city-wide testing program. In meeting after meeting, efforts to identify and adapt new teaching methods or strategies were aborted as soon as individuals began questioning the effects of the method under discussion on the city-wide test results. Initially, I simply could not comprehend or empathize with a twenty-year tenured teacher who seemed to want a guarantee of improved test scores before she would risk implementing a new strategy. I eventually realized that the testing was perceived not merely as an external threat but also as an internal threat to the teacher's own self-concept as a teacher. Whereas poor performance by a teacher's students on the reading achievement test would not precipitate the teacher's dismissal, such a performance, as a primary source of concrete feedback on teacher effectiveness, could threaten the teacher's perceptions of self. Although less than one third of Lortie's Five Towns respondents mentioned group performance on standardized achievement tests as a source of "craft pride", my experience with teachers in the lower elementary grades suggested that group achievement test performance was a key factor in the teachers' self-judgments of professional effectiveness. Given the publicity accorded achievement test scores reported for urban school systems and the teachers' relative lack of cynicism regarding the validity of such test scores, the primary and pre-primary teachers' concern with achievement test performance was comprehensible.

Ultimately however, the greatest barrier to innovation or change appeared

to be inherent in the very structure of the educational process itself. Without the funded planning time, the school staff would have had no time whatsoever for grade-level or school-wide meetings, for planning or sharing, or for developing interdependence and mounting collaborative staff efforts. Without special project funding, P.E.E.C.C. teachers would have had, as is the historic tradition, only brief lunch periods and monthly faculty meetings for collegial exchange. Project funding provided time for teachers to observe one another, to share new strategies and approaches, and to plan collectively for improving their educational environment.

As I tested each hypothesis, I gained an increasing appreciation of the complexity of the system and the individuals functioning within that system. I realized that no single consultation role would be maximally effective in all situations. In what the Gestaltists describe as an "ah hah" experience, I recognized that as a consultant I would have to do exactly what I had suggested teachers should do - individualize to address not only the needs of each individual staff member but also the specific issues and context of each situation.

Although recognition of this obvious solution to the role definition issue was a primary catalyst, other factors contributed to my abandonment of the student role. The key factor was an increase in staff requests for my services. As explained by a staff member many months later, by "field-testing" and questioning my own recommendations and by openly admitting their limitations in certain contexts, I had increased my credibility simply by demonstrating that I had many more questions than I had answers. Furthermore, it appeared as though my student behavior had helped to create a psychologically safe climate for staff members to reveal specific problems and seek consultation. Such changes indicated that the time had come for assuming my forth and final role as an on-site consultant.

Stage 4: On-site Consultation as Individualized Instruction

From my experiences as a student of the system, I recognized that the individual differences that existed among the staff members were not that dissimilar to the individual differences exhibited by students in any given classroom. Staff members differed greatly in their philosophies of teaching, their teaching styles, their knowledge of educational methods and psychology, their ability to empathize with students, their openness and willingness to change, and so forth. Similarly, as different combinations of staff members convened for planning meetings or committee work, each working group assumed its own unique collective personality as a result of the chemistry of the combined individual personalities. Different groups demonstrated differences in openness to suggestions, styles of communication and decision-making, initiative to innovate and implement change strategies, and so forth. If I was to facilitate each staff member's involvement in the change process, I recognized the necessity of assessing each situation and adapting my consultation role to the unique characteristics of the situation and the individual differences of those staff members involved.

The rationale for individualizing my approach to consultation was based on the assumption that the entire project was a learning experience for all involved. Although the staff collectively set their own educational objectives, each individual staff member differed in his/her previous learning experiences. To use Bloom's terminology (1976), each staff member differed in terms of the cognitive and affective entry behaviors which he/she brought to the project. Given such differences, any one consultation role or approach would have been appropriate and successful with some staff members but inappropriate and unsuccessful with others. Similar to Bloom's indictment of current educational practices, a singular role definition for the on-site consultant would have

served to perpetuate if not exacerbate individual differences among staff members in motivation and openness to change.

Individualization of my role as a consultant began with an initial assessment of each situation that I entered. Similar to the cube models found in the consultation and organization development literature (Miles and Schmuck, 1971; Blake and Moulton, 1977; Lieberman, Yalom, and Miles, 1973; etc.), I assessed the size and composition of the group, the focal issues to be addressed, and the context in terms of system ramifications. The second phase of the assessment was determined by the number of individuals involved in the situation. If the situation involved a group of staff members, the sociometric status of the individual group members, the group process mode, the stated goals of the group and the degree of ownership of both stated goals and competing unstated goals were assessed. If on the other hand the situation involved a one-to-one interaction between the consultant and one staff member, assessment focused on the affective and cognitive characteristics of the individual.

Although the specific adaptations in the consultant's role were made in response to each individual situation, several general principles did emerge. For example, the larger the group size, the less active my role as a consultant especially if the sociometric profiles of the group members indicated that the group contained one or more of the staff's influential leaders. Such meetings provided the opportunity for staff members to develop their own processes for planning, decision-making and so forth. Active involvement by the consultant would have interfered with the developmental process. My most active involvement in such group settings involved occasional maintainence functions such as gatekeeping. If a decision was imminent regarding a curricular issue and an opposing view had not been given an ample hearing, I attempted to draw those having an opposing view into the group discussion. Although such action delayed

immediate resolution, it ensured an ultimate resolution which would have more complete staff support and ownership. If the focal issue under discussion was related to what the staff considered to be my area of "expertise", I was occasionally asked for an opinion. In the context of opinion-seeking, I complied and offered my viewpoint on the issue.

In small committee meetings my degree of active involvement frequently increased. If group members became frustrated with the group process and decision-making mode, I frequently assumed the role of a process consultant working with group members in diagnosing the process characteristics of the group. In a few groups where a clear leadership hierarchy did not emerge, I occasionally assumed an active role of collaborating with group members to establish procedural policies.

Despite my participation in a variety of staff and committee meetings, I chose to spend the majority of my on-site consultation time working with individual staff members. Although the current trend toward organizational development, as well as the original intent of the project, emphasizes intervention and development at the system level, my experience as a student of the system convinced me that the individual was the key unit if change were to occur and to have a relative degree of permanence. My experience confirmed the frequently cited isolation of the individual teacher within the system. Lortie traces the historical precedents as well as the nature of the socialization process and the profession itself which contribute to and perpetuate such isolation. Given the isolation of the teacher in the traditional classroom structure of the school, the needs and issues of the individual are not recognized or addressed. Unless the consultant dealt with such needs and issues, the teacher, regardless of the attractiveness of innovative strategies explored in staff meetings, course work and so forth, could be expected to continue teaching just as he/she had always taught. This

assumption was frequently supported when, following a staff meeting or university session, one or more teachers, upon one-to-one interaction with the consultant, identified "reasons" why the particular strategy simply would not work in his/her classroom. Lortie's Five Towns data corroborated my observation of the limitations on diffusion of innovative strategies or methods. His respondents indicated that they adopted a particular method suggested by colleagues only if the method was consistent with the individual teacher's style of teaching and if the method "worked" in the teacher's own classroom.

My decision to focus on the individual teacher or staff member was based on observations of the system as well as the individual members of the system. Within the school, barriers to organizational change could be identified. Although foundation support made organizational change possible during the course of the project, the identified systemic barriers ominously threatened continuation of the change processes upon termination of foundation support. All planning-development meetings and committee work were made possible by the foundation grant. Internally, union specifications prohibit long hours of after-school demands on teacher time without additional compensation. Financial realities of the system negate the possibility of continued funding of those additional staff members who had made it possible for teachers to obtain release time from the classroom for planning and development meetings. Externally, state requirements regarding time allocations by subject area prohibit shortening the teaching day to allow for regular staff meeting within the existing time frame of the school day. Given such constraints, continuation of the organizational development and educational change efforts beyond the period of funding appeared to be outside the realm of possibility. Such a prognosis for financial support of long-term change processes at the school-wide

level suggested that an approach offering somewhat greater permanence would be preferable. According to Harrison (1968), such permanence of change is most likely to occur when the target of successful, in-depth intervention is th individual within the organization.

In working with individual staff members, the need for individualization of the consultant's role was most apparent. As noted earlier, several staff members did in fact initiate the interaction with the consultant with specific requests for suggestions, information and so forth. With other staff members, informal discussions with staff members led to the staff member's identification of a general area or problem that he/she was currently facing. By simply offering my assistance, I found that the staff member readily accepted my offer. With a few staff members, interest in project objectives and the change process was minimal. Although I frequently interacted with these staff members, our exchanges seldom led to consultation regarding classroom issues.

Once engaged in a consulting relationship, I immediately collaborated with the staff member to identify what specific outcomes he/she hoped to achieve. In many instances, teacher expectations were limited to the resolution of a specific problem with a particular student. In such instances, I worked with the teacher in analyzing the problem with as much emphasis placed on the process of analyzing or problem solving as was placed on the specific content of the problem. From experience, I had learned that while most teachers were able to describe a student's behavioral history in great detail, few teachers actually analyzed the problem situation. By varying the amount of time spent on this collaborative analysis, most teachers appeared to understand the process although true mastery could be claimed only after they demonstrated their ability to generalize the process to other situations.

When teacher expectations involved identification of new or alternative instructional strategies or materials, I was more product than process oriented. For such requests, I usually provided a brief overview, identified key resources for the teacher to consult, or researched the area myself if I was unfamiliar with the particular issue.

Some teachers simply wanted me to observe in their classroom or review a new strategy they had developed. Their expectations, although not explicitly stated, were that I would provide needed reinforcement or encouragement for a particular activity or achievement.

Regardless of the staff member's expectations, I reviewed all that I had learned about the individual before I developed my intervention or instructional strategy. This review involved an assessment of the affective and cognitive entry characteristics of the individual. For the more independent staff member, a few simple suggestions of possible directions or resources provided sufficient stimulus for their undertaking what amounted to independent study. For others, feedback and additional input were required every step of the way. Depending upon the learning style and other key affective and cognitive entry characteristics of the individual, I employed any one of the seven "instructional" strategies appearing in Mosston's (1972) continuum of teaching styles. Selection of the instructional mode or approach was a simple matching process. As I worked with individual staff members, I recognized that the consultation style most successful with a particular teacher was that style which the teacher himself/herself used most frequently in the classroom. The cognitive entry characteristics of the individual required further individualization of the consultation role as well as the amount of consultation time required. For example, depending upon a teacher's knowledge of behavior modification principles, a situation involving modification of a student's

behavior could require from a few minutes to several weeks of consultant time.

Further individualization was frequently required as a function of the central issue or issues in a specific consulting relationship. Depending upon the issue, the consultation role varied from trainer agent to facilitator, resource to collaborator in the learning process, mediator to advocate, involved participant to uninvolved observer. For example, when the issue revolved around the placement of a kindergarten student in a particular first-grade classroom for the following academic year, I assumed the advocate role for the teachers' position since the placement appeared potentially beneficial for the student. However, when the issue involved a teacher's opposition to a procedural policy established by the principal or school system, I assumed the role of mediator if I was unsuccessful in my attempt to totally avoid involvement in the situation. Of all the issues that arose, communication issues were most frequent. Assuming the trainer of change agents role described by Jung (1967), I served as the communication facilitator or link by developing communication linkages between parents and teachers, between teachers and school psychologists, and between teachers at different grade levels.

The final factor, the context within which the interaction occurred, influenced the role that I assumed. At a staff social function, I assumed the role of "friend" and colleague. Within the context of school "business" I assumed a more "professional" posture. Depending upon the staff members' expectations of me as a consultant, my role ranged in varying degrees on the continuum between "stranger" and "friend".

Individualizing my consultation role to accommodate the needs and individual differences of staff members and situations did not resolve all

conflicts or problematic situations which I encountered as a consultant. I was frequently frustrated by the staff's frequent resistance to change, the gaps in their knowledge and understanding of key educational issues, and their lack of awareness that such gaps existed. However, by viewing consultation as individualized instruction, my focus of attention changed. Rather than focusing on where or what the teachers ideally might have been or "should" have been, I focused on "diagnosing"current levels of functioning and constructing ways in which I could best facilitate their learning of needed skills or knowledge. Instead of focusing on the lack of "dramatic" change, I gained an appreciation of the subtle significant changes which did occur. When a rather authoritarian teacher finally decided to allow her students to leave for the lavatory independently without her supervision, I recognized the significance of the change in her attitude toward student autonomy. Although her new policy did not drastically alter the classroom climate or significantly influence her students' self-esteem on the evaluation post-test, it was a beginning.

Summary and Conclusions

In the PEECC Project, both the definition of the on-site consultant's role and the development of the consultation relationship were influenced and to some extent predetermined by several unique features of the project itself. Possibly the most influential factor was the timing of the consultant's entry into the project. Unlike many consultation relationships, the on-site consultant was brought into the project after one and a half years of staff planning had been completed and after project goals and objectives had been established. Second, as a teacher-based change project, leadership and direction were to come from the staff, not the consultant. Third, the consultant was to provide consultation services to the entire staff. Finally, the duration of

the consultation relationship was predetermined. The consultant's involvement was to continue throughout the two-year implementation phase.

By entering the project after the planning phase, I obviously had no opportunity for collaborating with the staff in the diagnosis of their needs and the identification of their goals and objectives. As in the purchase model of consultation, the success of my consultation was therefore dependent upon the accuracy of the staff's diagnosis. With no personal involvement in the planning phase, I had no real understanding or insight into the processes by which the goals had been identified or the degree to which the entire staff had contributed to the planning process. In the absence of complete documentation of the process, it was impossible to reconstruct the staff's rationale underlying each objective. Furthermore attempts to collaboratively reexamine the stated goals would have been counterproductive and futile at the point in time when the entire staff was geared toward implementation. The time for collaborative diagnosis and process consultation had passed. Whatever the planning process had been, the entire staff "knew" where they were going and that they had a consultant and other university resources to help them get there.

The timing of my entry into the project also influenced the process of role definition. Given the momentum that had developed from one and one half years of planning, the staff was preoccupied with implementation issues. Having been immersed in the planning process, it was difficult for them to realize what a newcomer to the project did not but should know. As a result, the staff appeared to assume that I knew what their expectations for me as the on-site consultant were. In retrospect, I believe that this assumption was compounded by a lack of a specific rationale or plan for consultant utilization. Without an understanding or knowledge of their expectations, I was forced

initially to accept the role definition and guidelines suggested by the project's external consultants. Although the importance of role definition is repeatedly emphasized in the literature, role definition by a third party external to the actual consultation relationship is not recommended for obvious reasons. Neither party in the consultation relationship had ownership of the definition.

The very nature of the project, a teacher based change project, also influenced the definition of my role and ultimately the consultation process. Since the staff was to provide leadership, I erroneously assumed that the staff would initiate discussion of my role in the project and would outline specifically what they expected from me as a consultant. This condition of the project precluded to some degree my ability to define my own role as an expert consultant would in terms of my own areas of expertise and identified strategies for intervention. Similar to the effects of the timing of my entry into the project, the nature of the project suggested that the collaborative role definition characteristic of process consultation was also inappropriate. As a relative newcomer to the project, I waited to learn how the staff wanted me to function within the project and the school in general.

Initially, awareness of the primary intent or nature of the project limited not only my involvement in defining my own role but also my day to day functioning as a consultant. Before, during and after almost every encounter, I questioned whether I had been too direct or had assumed too much initiative. Fortunately, my hypersensitivity to the issue of teacher or staff initiation abated over time until I was able to respond spontaneously and naturally.

As I was to provide consultation services to the entire staff, I entered the project with no specific primary client identified. One of the key functions of the primary client is the facilitation of the consultant's entry into the

organization, a key determinant of the success of the consultation relationship according to Lake and Callahan (1971). Ideally, the client contact should be high enough in the organizational structure to influence others and should be experienced in working with behavioral science consultants (Schein, 1969). Without a primary client or contact, my entry into the project was rather unstructured. Without having an initial primary client relationship with the principal, communication with the staff's leadership was sporadic and diffuse. Role expectations and guidelines evolved from experience rather than from clear directions provided by the principal or staff leaders. As a result, my role as an on-site consultant evolved over time and varied as a function of context, issues, and clientele.

Finally, given the predetermined duration of the consultation relationship, both parties in the relationship lost a few degrees of freedom. Although the staff selected the university to provide the identified resources, they did not directly select the on-site consultant. Given the contractual arrangement between the university and the school system, neither the staff nor the consultant were free to terminate the consultation relationship. Despite limitations, the time commitment did serve to increase efforts for cordial co-existence. Although different points of view were frequently expressed, resolution of most conflicting viewpoints prevented disintegration of the consultation relationship.

Given the unique features or conditions described above, definition of the consultant's role did not develop in sequence during a discrete phase of the relationship. Despite several attempts to develop a specific role definition, the consultation process continually led to situations wherein the static, defined role seemed highly inappropriate. Rather than the role definition preceding and prescribing the consultation process, the process of role definition

operated in conjunction with the consultation process, each process interactively influencing the other.

For a long-term, on-going consultation relationship, accepting role definition as a process rather than a discrete phase of the consultation relationship offered several benefits. Without a clearly defined, viable role, I was constantly searching for characteristics or conditions in each situation which might indicate the role that I should assume for maximum effectiveness in that particular situation. A formal role definition would not only have limited my ability to adjust my role to each situation but would also have eliminated the need for assessing each situation. The security of a defined role would have decreased my sensitivity to the nuances of each situation as well as the subtle changes which occurred over time. Flexibility in role definition also enabled me to be more responsive to the individual needs of each staff member.

Although my role varied as a function of each situation and the particular characteristics of the situation, four general stages of role definition evolved over time, each stage having its own unique benefits. Initially, the role of Rogerian resource was quite functional in that it provided a neutral posture which facilitated initial assimilation of the consultant into the organization. My second role, that of university instructor provided me with the opportunity to work with the entire staff as a group of "students" and observe the similarities of "student" behavior regardless of age or educational level. In my third role, that of student of the system, I acquired invaluable insight into the dynamics of the individual staff members and the system itself and an understanding of the teachers' perspectives on various issues. Formulation of my fourth role drew heavily upon the knowledge and experiences acquired during the preceding role stages. My experiences in the development of my role definition enabled me to recognize

that in the consultation relationship, like the teacher-student relationship, the primary process characterizing the relationship is an educational or learning process.

By viewing consultation as an educational process, many incomprehensible situations became comprehensible and familiar. Although the staff had collectively set its own goals, or at least agreed upon the project goals as established, achievement of those goals was a highly individual matter. Staff members differed in commitment and motivation to achieve project goals. They differed in the skills, knowledge, and attitudes which they brought to the project. Viewed from this perspective, the consultant underutilization, resistance to suggestions, and unwillingness to change characteristic of some staff members was to be expected. For some, achievement of project goals required more motivation, effort, and modification of their teaching methods than they were willing to invest. For these staff members, I had to identify the learning task or unit closest to their level of functioning that would ultimately lead to achievement of project goals. My task was then to provide the necessary conditions, support, reinforcement and so forth that would facilitate their achievement of the identified task. Other staff members, highly motivated to achieve project goals and willing to change, identified needed modifications and independently progressed toward achieving project goals requiring little from a consultant other than periodic suggestions, information, or references. As a result, successful consultation was dependent upon individualization of the consultant's intervention and role definition.

From my experiences in the P.E.E.C.C. Project, I found that each staff member did in his/her own way change to some degree. Aware of the existing individual differences, I did not expect all to become masters at creating new educational environments or to achieve project goals within a two-year period. Neither did I expect that I could provide the needed resources and intervention to

accommodate the needs of all individuals within my two-year period of involvement. However, although many changes may have eluded capture within the parameters of the projects evaluation design, neither the consultant nor the staff remained unchanged. Regardless of the subtlety or magnitude of the changes evidenced in the classroom, the consultation relationship and the PEECC Project in general provided learning experiences for all involved.

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